

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF TWO OSLO 4328

5. PUBLIC OPINION IS DIVIDED IN NORWAY, AS ELSEWHERE, OVER THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT, WITH THE SPLIT TO SOME EXTENT FOLLOWING PARTY LINES. DURING THIS WEEK'S FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE IN THE STORTING, THE HEAD OF THE CHRISTIAN PEOPLE'S PARTY, FORMER PRIME MINISTER KORVALD, IMPLIED CRITICISM OF FRYDENLUND WHEN HE QUESTIONED THE WISDOM OF FORCING ISRAEL BACK TO PRE-SIX-DAY WAR LINES-- AN ACTION WHICH HE NOTED, WOULD AGAIN DIVIDE JERUSALEM; HE ASKED FOR AN ELABORATION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION. CONSERVATIVE PARTY CHAIRMAN WILLOCH SAID HE AGREED GENERALLY WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY BUT COMMENTED THAT NONE HAD A RIGHT TO CRITICIZE ISRAEL FOR DEMANDING MORE THAN WORDS TO GUARANTEE ITS EXISTENCE. HE SAID THAT, WITHOUT U.S. SUPPORT, ISRAEL WOULD NOT EXIST TODAY, AND NORWEGIAN POLICY SHOULD NOT BE DICTATED BY CONSIDERATIONS OF OIL QUOTAS. BY CONTRAST, SOCIALIST ELECTORAL ALLIANCE MEMBER KIELLAND BITTERLY ATTACKED ISRAEL FOR A "LEBENSRAUM" POLICY.

6. IN RESPONSE TO THESE CONFLICTING PRESSURES, FRYDENLUND STOOD HIS GROUND. IN HIS REMARKS ON NOVEMBER 20 TO THE STORTING HE SAID THAT BRATTEL'S POLICY IS BUILT ON THE MAIN LINES OF WHAT HAS BEEN
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NORWEGIAN M.E. POLICY FOR A LONG TIME: NAMELY TO MAINTAIN AN

IMPARTIAL AND NEUTRAL POSTURE TOWARD THE WARRING PARTIES. HE STRESSED THAT THIS POLICY DOES NOT EMANATE FROM TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS (I.E. THE OIL EMBARGO), BUT IS BASED ENTIRELY ON HOW NORWAY CAN BEST CONTRIBUTE TO PEACE IN THE AREA. FRYDENLUND ADDED THAT THIS POLICY IS ALSO INTENDED TO ENSURE THAT NORWAY CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE UN EFFORT IN THE M.E. (COMMENT: PRIVATELY, OFFICIALS LIKE DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS VIBE HAVE ARGUED THAT NORWAY COULD HARDLY PLAY A PEACE-KEEPING ROLE IF IT TOOK SIDES IN THE CONFLICT). RESPONDING TO WHAT HE KNOWS IS A POPULAR DESIRE TO PLAY A HELPFUL ROLE, FRYDENLUND TOLD THE STORTING THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD OFFERED CONSIDERABLE HUMANITARIAN AID, PROVIDING 500,000 KRONER TO THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS, AND THAT TWO EMISSARIES OF THE NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL HAD RECENTLY RETURNED FROM THE M.E. AND BRIEFED THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ON THE NEED FOR EXTENSIVE ASSISTANCE THERE.

7. FRYDENLUND REITERATED ON NOV 20 THE THREE POINTS WHICH HIS GOVERNMENT CONSIDERED MUST BE THE BASIS FOR ANY SETTLEMENT (PARA 3 ABOVE), BUT HE RETREATED SLIGHTLY ON THE KEY QUESTION OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. WHEREAS HIS FIRST POINT HAD REJECTED THE PRINCIPLE OF TERRITORIAL CONQUEST BY FORCE, HE ADMITTED ON NOVEMBER 20 THAT THE ARABS AND ISRAELIS DIFFER SHARPLY IN THEIR INTERPRETATION OF SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 242-- WITHOUT EXPLAINING THAT THE PRINCIPAL POINT OF DIFFERENCE IS WHETHER THE RESOLUTION REQUIRES WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. HE CONCLUDED MODESTLY THAT IT IS MUCH EASIER TO TALK ABOUT THAN TO ACHIEVE A REAL PEACE, PARTICULARLY WHERE THE PALESTINE ARABS ARE CONCERNED.

8. COMMENT: FOR PAROCHIAL AND IDEOLOGICAL REASONS, NORWAY HAS LONG TENDED TO DOWNPLAY THE IMPORTANCE OF NATO'S SOUTHERN FLANK, FEARING THAT IT DIVERTS NATO ATTENTION FROM THE DANGERS ON THE NORTHERN FLANK, AND WEAKENS SUPPORT FOR NATO IN NORWAY BECAUSE OF THE "UNDEMOCRATIC" CHARACTER OF THE SOUTHERN FLANK ALLIES (GREECE, TURKEY, PORTUGAL). IT WAS NOT SURPRISING, THEREFORE, THAT NORWAY SHOULD BE INSENSITIVE TO THE STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF AN ARAB VICTORY OVER ISRAEL WHICH COULD RESULT IN A SHARP ACCRETION IN SOVIET INFLUENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND ACROSS NORTH AFRICA.

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9. NORWAY'S CONCERN NOT TO BE CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE IN A GLOBAL CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE US AND THE USSR WAS ALSO A FACTOR IN ITS REACTION. THIS CONCERN WAS REFLECTED IN ANXIOUS QUERIES FROM NORWEGIAN OFFICIALS ABOUT THE STATE OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS WHEN THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT BROKE OUT. UNDERLYING THIS CONCERN IS AN UNEASY FEELING EXPRESSED BY SOME NORWEGIAN MILITARY THAT THE USSR MAY SOME DAY CHOOSE TO STRIKE OUT AT THE U.S. IN A TIME OF GLOBAL CONFRONTATION BY APPLYING PRESSURE AGAINST NATO'S VULNERABLE

NORTHERN NORWAY FLANK. IT WAS UNDERSTANDABLE, THEREFORE, WHY FRYDENLUND QUICKLY REASSURED THE STORTING THAT THE POLICY OF DETENTE IN US-SOVIET RELATIONS WAS STILL OPERATIVE.

10. FOR SEVERAL REASONS THEREFORE, IT WAS NATURAL THAT NORWAY SHOULD TREAT THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT AS ESSENTIALLY A REGIONAL RATHER THAN A GLOBAL PROBLEM, AND SEE NO CONTRADICTION BETWEEN NEUTRALITY IN THE CONFLICT AND PROTECTION OF ITS LONG-TERM SECURITY INTERESTS IN NATO. NORWAY WAS NOT MOTIVATED BY FEAR OF THE USSR OR AN OIL BOYCOTT, SO MUCH AS BY TRADITIONAL RELUCTANCE TO TAKE SIDES IN REGIONAL CONFLICTS AND CONCERN TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PEACE-PROMOTION EFFORTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS.

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